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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/725,862

12/01/2003

Kenji Ichikawa

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LAHIVE & COCKFIELD, LLP
ONE POST OFFICE SQUARE
BOSTON, MA 02109-2127

EXAMINER

RUTHKOSKY, MARK

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1795

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

03/21/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/725,862	Applicant(s) ICHIKAWA ET AL.	
	Examiner Mark Ruthkosky	Art Unit 1795	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 December 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 12/26/2007 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The amended claims include the limitation, "a non-contact type motor." It is not clear what constitutes a non-contact type motor. The motor must be mechanically in contact with the valve to turn the body, as claimed.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are

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such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-3 and 8-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sano (JP 11-062631) in view of Farrell et al. (US 5,522,416.)

The instant claims are to a pressure regulator for fuel cells, which is disposed in a discharge line for discharging an oxidizing agent supplied to a cathode of fuel cells, for controlling a discharged amount of the oxidizing agent to regulate the pressure of the oxidizing agent in the cathode, comprising an opening for passing said oxidizing agent there through, a valve body for opening or closing said opening; a resilient member for urging a rotational shaft to which said valve body is connected, to turn in a direction to open said opening; a limiting member for limiting an angular position of the valve body which is turned by said resilient member, to keep said opening fully open; and a motor energizable for turning said valve body in a direction to close said opening against resilient forces of said resilient member, wherein when the non-contact type motor is de-energized, the opening is fully open for discharging water from the fuel cells without consuming electric power, and an opening sensor for detecting a magnetic field from a magnet embedded in said rotational shaft thereby to detect an angular position of said rotational shaft.

The intended use of the regulator has been considered, but is not given patentable weight, as it does not define the product of the invention. The intended use of the regulator does not further limit the regulator. The limitation, “wherein when the non-contact type motor is de-energized, the opening is fully open for discharging water from the fuel cells without consuming electric power” is an intended use limitation for the system. MPEP 2114 states: APPARATUS CLAIMS MUST BE STRUCTURALLY DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE PRIOR ART.

While features of an apparatus may be recited either structurally or functionally, claims directed to an apparatus must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function. In re Schreiber, 128 F.3d 1473, 1477-78, 44 USPQ2d 1429, 1431-32 (Fed. Cir. 1997.) and

MANNER OF OPERATING THE DEVICE DOES NOT DIFFERENTIATE APPARATUS CLAIM FROM THE PRIOR ART A claim containing a “recitation with respect to the manner in which a claimed apparatus is intended to be employed does not differentiate the claimed apparatus from a prior art apparatus” if the prior art apparatus teaches all the structural limitations of the claim. Ex parte Masham, 2 USPQ2d 1647 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1987.) The motor is capable of being turned off after opening the valve. The combination of the regulator in a fuel cell does not further limit the regulator.

Sano (JP 11-062631) teaches a regulator comprising an opening for passing a fluid, a valve body for opening or closing said opening; a resilient member for urging a rotational shaft to which said valve body is connected, to turn in a direction to open said opening; a limiting member for limiting an angular position of the valve body; and a motor energizable for turning said valve body in a direction to close said opening against resilient forces of said resilient member (see figures 1-4 and paragraphs 19-21, 25 and 32-38.) The motor is a stepping motor, which is a brushless motor (see paragraph 21.) Sano does not teach an opening sensor for detecting a magnetic field from a magnet embedded in said rotational shaft thereby to detect an angular position of said rotational shaft.

Farrell et al. (US 5,522,416) teaches a pressure regulator having an opening, a valve body, and a motor, including a means for indicating the angular position of a rotor including a magnet fitted to the rotor and a sensor mounted in the housing (see at least claims 1-6.) The

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motor is a non-contact type motor as it connected through a coupled (see figures 1-2 and col. 4, lines 1-7.) It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a magnet embedded in the rotor and an opening sensor in the regulator of Sano in order to indicate the angular position of a rotor, as taught in Farrell. Embedding the magnet would be considered obvious based on the teaching of fitting the magnet to the rotor.

Further, the references do not teach that when the non-contact type motor is de-energized, the opening is fully open for discharging water from the fuel cells without consuming electric power.” If the intended use of the system is given weight, then it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to turn off the motor during operation to save energy. The artisan would have found the claimed invention to be obvious in light of the teachings of the references.

Claims 4-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sano (JP 11-062631) in view of Farrell et al. (US 5,522,416), as applied in the previous section, and further in view of Dell et al. (CA 2,261,243.)

Sano (JP 11-062631) teaches a regulator comprising an opening for passing a fluid, a valve body for opening or closing said opening; a resilient member for urging a rotational shaft to which said valve body is connected, to turn in a direction to open said opening; a limiting member for limiting an angular position of the valve body; and a motor energizable for turning said valve body in a direction to close said opening against resilient forces of said resilient member (see figures 1-4 and paragraphs 19-21, 25 and 32-38.) Farrell et al. (US 5,522,416) teaches a pressure regulator having an opening, a valve body, and a motor, including a means for

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indicating the angular position of a rotor including a magnet fitted to the rotor and a sensor mounted in the housing (see at least claims 1-6.) The references do not teach a sealing member is disposed between the bearing and the opening of the regulator. Further, the reference does not teach that the valve body, the rotational shaft and the bearing are made of stainless steel. The reference is silent to the materials that form the regulator.

Dell et al. (CA 2,261,243), however teaches a pressure regulator that is made of stainless steel (claims 1-20, page 2, lines 25-30, page 4, line 3 to page 5, line 20 and page 6, line 24-27.) The regulator further includes sealing members that radially form a seal with the pressure regulator so as to seal the regulator (paragraph bridging page 4 and page 5.) It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to make the components of the regulator of Sano out of stainless steel as taught in Dell, as stainless steel is well described in the art to maintain a fluid path at high pressures, while providing a material that is corrosive resistant. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use stainless steel for a pressure regulator as taught in Dell in order to operate at high pressure.

Further, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a sealing member between the bearing of the regulator and the rotational shaft of the regulator in order to seal the regulator and prevent the leakage of high-pressure fluid from the regulator. Dell is cited for using sealing members to prevent the unwanted loss of fluid in a pressure-regulated system. The skilled artisan would recognize that a seal is useful for preventing the loss of fluid in a sealed system. The artisan would have found the claimed invention to be obvious in light of the teachings of the references.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to the claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection based on the amended claims.

Applicant argues that the newly claimed features are not taught in the prior art of record. Applicant further argues one of ordinary skilled in the art would not be motivated to combine the teachings of the Farrell reference concerning a regulation system with the teachings of the Sano reference concerning a valve body to make a valve fully open when de-energized so as to discharge air containing water to the outside environment. The limitations are intended use limitations as noted in the rejection. The limitations have been considered with regard to the structure of the regulator, but are not given patentable weight with regard to the intended use of the regulator. The regulator of the prior art is capable of performing the claimed functions.

Examiner Correspondence

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mark Ruthkosky whose telephone number is 571-272-1291. The examiner can normally be reached on FLEX schedule (generally, Monday-Thursday from 9:00-6:30.) If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached at 571-272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished

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applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free.)

/Mark Ruthkosky/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1795